



Instructor and Student: Two Roles Melt Together

by Mario Rossilli, VA Jackson

Linda Whittle, a ski instructor, doesn't use a wheelchair or a white cane. To the eye, Whittle is a quintessential picture of health – a blonde-haired competitive skier who looks closer to 30 than her actual age of 40.

Whittle, however, is fighting her own kind of disability. She has uterine cancer. She found out just last year.

Attending the Winter Sports Clinic for her fifth consecutive year, Whittle says disabled veterans have inspired her and taught her how to live with her ailment.

"These guys inspire me to want to fight my cancer," says Whittle, a transplanted New Yorker who now lives in Steamboat Springs, Colo. "Darol Kubacz, another participant summed it up best when he said, 'You're just like us, you're just not in a wheelchair. You're in pain. We know you're in pain.'"

Indeed, Whittle's most inspirational instructor in dealing with cancer has been one of her students, Jeff Ellett, a visually impaired Marine Corps veteran. The two met here five years ago and their relationship has evolved over time, shifting from instructor and student, to friends, to student and instructor.

"I e-mail and keep in contact with her and try to cheer her up," says Ellett, 53, a stroke survivor from Manga, Utah.

Whittle's cancer is untreatable and not in remission.

"We go beyond just the Clinic," Whittle says. "Jeff has been real supportive. He supports me a lot and I support him a lot."

Together, the two went to the recent Winter Olympics. "It was a wonderful, beautiful experience," said Ellett.

For Ellett, visiting the Olympics was a dream that took shape five years ago when he first started taking lessons from Whittle.

"I took him to the Olympics and my friends asked, 'What's his disability?'" said Whittle. "It was a really cool experience for my friends. They were amazed with Jeff and what Jeff could do. You know people have this attitude that someone with a disability can't do things. We have this attitude of can-do, that we can do things."

It's an attitude Whittle maintains in her fight against cancer. She continues to compete with success in skiing events. "I just keep conquering things, I just need to keep a positive attitude. I really believe in miracles. *Miracles on the Mountainside* really happen."



TODAY'S SCHEDULE

- 6:30-8:30am **BREAKFAST:** Conference Center
- 8-11:30am **Downhill Skiing:** Staging Area
Moonshine, Wildcat, Slider
- 8-4:00pm **Horseback Riding & Fishing:**
Sopris Therapy Services, Carbondale
- 8:30-3pm **Cross Country Skiing, Snowshoeing,
Orienteering**
Ashcroft Ski Touring Center
- 9-11:30am **Scuba Diving:** Silver Tree Hotel Pool
- 9:30-11:30am **Sledge Hockey:** Aspen Ice Rink
- 10-12 noon **Rock Climbing:** Conference Center Circle
Handcycling: Conference Center
- 11:00-1:00pm **LUNCH:** Conference Center Ballroom
- 11:30-4pm **Shooting Sports:** Basalt Trap Club
- 12:30pm **Downhill Skiing:** Staging Area
Rock Island, Granite, Sneaky's
- 1-3:00pm **Rock Climbing:** Conference Center Circle
Handcycling: Conference Center
- 1-3:30pm **Trip to Aspen:** Silver Tree
- 2-4:00pm **Scuba Diving:** Silver Tree Hotel Pool
- 4-5:15pm **DINNER:** Conference Center Ballroom
- 7-9:00pm **Self Defense for the Visually Impaired:**
Caberet Room, Silver Tree Hotel

CEU Educational Workshops

2-3:30pm

**Aquatic Therapy (Part II):
Selecting Interventions,
Effectively Documenting
Outcomes, and Articulating
Benefits**

Ellen Broach, Ed.D, CTRS

5:30-7:00pm

**A Road to Greater Personal
Freedom**

Jules Moravec, Ph.D.

7:00-8:30pm

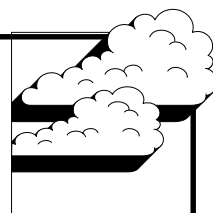
**Recreational Therapy as a
Tool to Successful Vocational
Rehabilitation Closure**

Urban Miyares

**Web site for the
Winter Sports Clinic:**

**[www.va.gov/vetevent/
wsc/2002/](http://www.va.gov/vetevent/wsc/2002/)**

**WEATHER
CORNER**

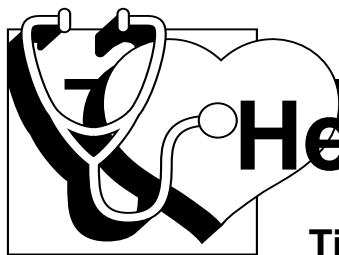


Partly Cloudy

UV Index 7 - High

0% Chance of Precip

**Today's High: 58
Tonight's Low: 26**



HealthWatch

Tips for Today

First ice, then heal! When you strain a muscle or joint, think ice for the first 24-48 hours. Although the hot tub may seem enticing, warming those injuries can cause increased bleeding into the area. That can lead to increased swelling and soreness. Stick with the ice to reduce swelling and bleeding, then ease into that hot tub later.

Drink plenty of fluids! Because of the low humidity, along with the strenuous exercise you will undertake this week, it is very easy to become dehydrated. Always carry water with you and drink it! And if you hit the lounge for apres ski, make sure that you drink a glass of water in between alcoholic drinks. This will help to keep you hydrated, as well as happy!

Medical Assistance

Call 911 for emergencies

7:30 am-9:30 pm:

**cell 291-9501 or
923-2000 ext. 380**

After hours:

First, 291-9501

**If no answer,
call 923-3900**

Gossip Goodies

Tattle-Trails

by Spilzie Beans



Hi there! Man, Spilzie has been overworked today covering all the antics on the slope and in the pools! So let's get right to the juicy stuff – I mean, that's why you read this column, isn't it?

There is a certain attractive male, we'll call him the *Human Eraser*, who carved his initials all over the mountainside today – with his bottom! We hear he'll be going back up tomorrow to try to erase them. Oh, L.W., say it isn't so...

H.C., you could serve as the vocals for the Energizer Bunny! All that talk and all that energy, Spilzie hears that the only time you stopped was while you were scuba diving! But another informant said that that wasn't so, as you *were* heard under the water!

Did you see the girls in hot pink roaming around the Conference Center yesterday? These two precious girls, Audrey and Darlena, were last spotted in the circle chillin'! Both were adorned with hot pink accessories. The only difference was the human (Audrey) had brown hair and the guide dog (Darlena) is a blonde. Too cute!

On a more mysterious note, who was that certain Instructor (or was it a Coach) who reportedly lost the stripes off her bathing suit in the hot tub Wednesday night??? Inquiring minds want to know *more*!

J. H. you know more than you're telling. Fess up guy! Spilzie beans!

If you hear or see anything of interest, stop by the Media Center and leave your tip with one of Spilzie's confidants. We promise not to reveal our sources. Well, tortures and bribes aside. Listen for more tomorrow, dahlings!

Race Day Start Schedule Friday, April 12, 2002

| <u>Teams</u> | <u>Regular Start Time</u> | <u>Race Day Start Time</u> |
|--------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| Gray Wolf | Monday, 8:00 a.m. | |
| Naked Lady | Monday, 8:00 a.m. | 8:00 a.m. |
| Sunnyside | Monday, 8:00 a.m. | |
| Bonzai | Monday, 12:30 p.m. | |
| Free Fall | Monday, 12:30 p.m. | 9:30 a.m. |
| Sheer Bliss | Monday, 12:30 p.m. | |
| Granite | Tuesday, 8:00 a.m. | |
| Rock Island | Tuesday, 8:00 a.m. | 10:45 a.m. |
| Sneaky's | Tuesday, 8:00 a.m. | |
| Moonshine | Tuesday, 12:30 p.m. | |
| Slider | Tuesday, 12:30 p.m. | 12:00 noon |
| Wildcat | Tuesday, 12:30 p.m. | |



Eats

Menu for Today

Lunch (11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.): Hamburgers, Brats and Hotdogs; Sauerkraut; Potato Salad; Grilled Veggies; and Chips.

Dinner (4:00 p.m. - 5:30 p.m.): Tossed Salad; Zucchini, Yellow Squash and Red Onions; Diced Fresh Fruit; Cajun Catfish; Chicken Breast with Supreme Sauce; Baked Cheese-filled Manicotti; Hot Veggie; and Rolls with Butter.

Breakfast for tomorrow (6:30 a.m. - 8:30 a.m.): Sliced Fresh Fruit; Oatmeal with Raisins; Scrambled Eggs; Bacon and Sausage; Biscuits and Apple Honey Butter; and Chilled Juices.

Celebrity Sighting

While on the shopping trip to Aspen on Tuesday, **Rubin Martinez** (#50, Oklahoma City, OK) went into Boogie's to grab some lunch, and spotted the *tres chic* glamorous **Melanie Griffith** with drop-dead gorgeous hubby **Antonio Banderas** munching away on cheeseburgers. Even the beautiful people must eat ...

2002 Goal Ball Champs

"Team Histo" took top honors in Tuesday night's Goal Ball tournament.

Anita Shorb (#76, Denver, CO), **Danny Taylor** (#79, Salt Lake City, UT), **Emzy Martin** (#49, Louisville, KY) and his wife **Bonnie Martin** triumphed over all competition to take first place honors. Team Histo players have a serious retinal condition called ocular histoplasmosis syndrome (OHS), but it didn't stand in the way of victory! Congratulations, Team Histo!

Don't Forget to Vote!!!

At the Closing Ceremonies, six individuals will be recognized for unique contributions to the Clinic. How are they selected? YOU choose them! Stop by now in the lobby of the Conference Center and the Host Room to vote for your candidates to receive the following awards:

- * Team Leader Award
- * Downhill Ski Instructor Award
- * Cross Country Ski Instructor Award
- * Judy Shawo Commitment to Excellence Award
- * Sid Ford Award for Service Above and Beyond the Call of Duty
- * Linnie Howard Spirit Award

Voting ends at NOON on Friday, so be sure to cast your vote for your favorites now!

Freedom Endures at the Winter Sports Clinic

by Kim Byers, Ann Arbor VAMC

“If you’re an American, you should serve in the military,” says Sergeant First Class (SFC) Michael Scott McElhiney, who was born and raised in Kansas City but is currently stationed at Ft. Campbell, Ky. Injured only last December while serving in the U.S. Army Special Forces in Afghanistan, SFC McElhiney, 31, is the most recent combat-injured participant at this year’s Winter Sports Clinic.

Serving on a training mission in the Middle East last September 11, SFC McElhiney was called to Operation Enduring Freedom shortly after the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington, D.C. “We were happy to go,” he says now. “One of the thoughts that was foremost in our minds was that we didn’t want to let the American people down, or the veterans who served before us. That helps you focus on your mission, and the fear seems to go away so you can do what needs to be done. We trained all our (military) lives for this – we got in there, we did our part and we did it well.”

SFC McElhiney joined the Special Forces, he says, because he wanted to do “something that mattered, something that had consequences. When that time finally came, sure enough there were consequences but I was happy to do it.” On December 5, located north of Kandahar, SFC McElhiney’s unit was building up their forces when they were hit by an erratic bomb that landed on top of them. Three Americans died that day, along with five or six Afghans, with an estimated 40 total casualties. In addition to losing his right arm below the elbow, SFC McElhiney also suffered a collapsed lung, a fractured humerus, shrapnel wounds, and other injuries. Conscious when he was first injured, he later lost consciousness and awoke four days later in a hospital in Germany, where his wife, Judy had flown in to join him. “The doctors said her presence made my healing process go a lot faster,” he says. “Without her, I don’t know if my attitude would have been the same.”

Despite his injuries, SFC McElhiney says he’d “do it all again if I had to.” His only regret is “not being able to serve again with people of that caliber in a combat situation.” Describing himself as “very functional,” he remains on active duty and plans to stay in the Army after completing his rehabilitation.

SFC McElhiney found out about the Winter Sports Clinic from Rudi Gresham, Senior Advisor to VA Secretary Anthony J. Principi and former Special Forces advisor in Vietnam, who came to see him during his hospitalization at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington. His trip to Snowmass was sponsored by singer Wayne Newton. “I jumped at the opportunity,” he says. “There are lots of veterans here who show you that life goes on. A disability is still hard, but with all the advanced technology and adaptive equipment available, you can still have fun and do a lot of things. I love being here, and I’m having a great time.”

A favorite aspect of the Clinic, in addition to the opportunity to go skiing, has been meeting the other veterans. “I love sitting down and talking with them,” SFC McElhiney says. “They’ve got a lot of great stories...they served before us and they didn’t let us down – and we’re not going to let them down. I’m very proud to talk with them.”

A skier before his injury, SFC McElhiney acknowledges there is some adjustment to skiing with a disability, but he’s pleased to know he can still do it. Like all the other Clinic participants have learned, “This helps show you that you can do everything that someone who is fully intact can do – just in a different way.”